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Tory press take aim at Jeremy Corbyn

It is part of the drip, drip of denigrating propaganda...



The Conservative Party advert showing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn dressed as a chicken (Image: PA)

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In the middle of last week, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had lost [three key votes](#) in the House, overseen the [expulsion of 21 of his Conservative Party colleagues](#) and, by general consensus, partaken in a Prime Ministers Questions characterised by [cheap shots and obfuscation](#).

As a result [the Sun newspaper chose](#) to lead on its front page not with withering condemnation of the PM's shocking displays of arrogance and bluster, but with the head

of the leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, superimposed on to the body of a chicken.

It was tiresome, crude, ridiculous but entirely to be expected and it's useful to see the attacks on him (by the Sun, Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail and Express in particular) as just the latest in a long line of attempts to communicate to their readership, and by extension the electorate, Corbyn's complete unsuitability for high office.

Through ridicule and fear-mongering, the Sun continually indulges in the drip, drip of denigrating propaganda aimed at the leader of the opposition.

It's part of a pattern. [As I've written elsewhere](#), on the eve of polling day in the 2017 General Election, the first 13 pages of the Daily Mail were intended to provoke fear and loathing.

On page one, Corbyn was pictured alongside Diane Abbott and John McDonnell as an "apologist for terror" whilst inside the paper the attempts to link him with terrorism both past and present were meant to communicate his contempt for Britain and British values.

[The Sun's editorial](#) was equally as damning encapsulating two years of anti-Corbyn sentiment with this warning aimed at potential Labour voters: "A generation after the end of the Soviet Union, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of almost every ruinous and oppressive hard-Left regime worldwide, you would be helping to establish a new one, right here in Britain. It would be the gravest mistake this country has ever made."

The Sun's latest attempt at Corbyn bashing was inspired by Johnson's [labelling of him](#) as "gigantic chlorinated chicken" when the Labour leader, as part of a wider cross-party consensus, denied the Conservatives the opportunity of an early general election.

[According to the Sun](#) (note the use of the PM's first name only): "Boris accused Mr Corbyn of political cowardice saying he was 'the first leader of the opposition in the democratic history of our country to refuse the invitation of an election'."

That should have been that. But what happened next suggests a serious misreading of the public mood by the Conservative Party and a failure, even now, to fully realise the severity of the "no-deal" Brexit situation.

Last Friday, the morning after the Sun front page, the Conservatives' Twitter account shared a doctored image of Corbyn (JFC) dressed in a chicken outfit along with the caption: "Hey (KFC), we've found an even bigger chicken than you."

Irrespective of the fact that the composition of the tweet and image made little sense, this was followed by the Tory press office dispatching actual chicken breasts to political journalists, in what the Financial Times' [Jim Pickard](#) stated was "a somewhat peculiar move even by the usual standards of political gimmicks".

A press release accompanying the food, labelled Fowl Play, laboured the point: "Move over Colonel. Jeremy Corbyn's the new biggest chicken in town."



(Image: PA)

Yes, this really did happen.

Thankfully, such acts were roundly condemned - even by those in the Conservative Party.

[Baroness Sayeeda Warsi](#), who co-chaired the Conservatives between 2010-12, tweeted: “We are in the middle of a national crisis and this is our response. How can grown men reduce themselves to this level of silliness. What has become of this great party of ours.”

One could argue that the main effect of all this was deflect attention away from Johnson's disastrous week and that would be certainly true on one level. At the same time though, it revealed the depths to which the Tory Party and the right wing press are willing to allow themselves to sink.

And could it be that Corbyn has emerged from the political wreckage of the past 10 days with his standing as a man of substance improved and invigorated?

Maybe, because as Johnson reveals himself to be a meandering "man without a plan" at every opportunity, Corbyn has united opposition parties and [in the words of the Guardian's sketch writer, John Crace](#), "is increasingly looking like the sensible, safe choice. [Against shutting down](#) parliament just because MPs had started asking awkward questions. Against a no-deal Brexit that could wipe 5% off GDP. And for respecting the rule of law. The sort of things on which most Tory MPs used to pride themselves."

If a more electorally palatable Corbyn is anywhere near the reality, then we can expect the Tory bastions of the Fourth Estate to ramp up the pressure even further.

Remember, on a number of occasions he has vowed upon gaining power to transform our media industries.

[In a lecture at the Edinburgh TV festival in 2018](#) he said that the "stranglehold of elite power and billionaire domination over large parts of our media" must end.

In [a video broadcast on YouTube](#) earlier that year Corbyn was unequivocal, he had news for the press barons: change was coming.

Dangerous, cowardly chicken, indeed.

ALSO BY JOHN:

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